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HOW TO PREPARE AN EXPOSITORY SERMON ON THE LIFE AND WORK OF STEPHEN.*

By Rev. Prof. GEORGE B. STEVENS, D. D., Ph. D.,
New Haven, Conn.

As I have never prepared a sermon on this theme, I can only state what I should regard as the points to be ascertained and considered in so doing. These suggestions I may group under two heads: (I.) The gathering of the material, and (II.) the use of the material for the purpose of the sermon.

I.

(1) Read carefully through all notices about Stephen and his work in Acts 6: 5-8: 2; 11: 19; 22: 20.

(2) Ascertain the significance of such facts as that he was (a)_x a deacon in the church and (b) a Hellenist.

(3) The occasion and subject of his disputes with the Jews.

(4) The Jews' accusations against him; their probable *grounds*.

(5) Seek out any expressions or hints in Stephen's address before the Sanhedrin which may throw light on the grounds of their accusations against him.

(6) Consider the effect of his martyrdom upon the course of events in the church (see especially 11: 19).

(7) Study his work as a preparation for the work of Paul.

II.

On the basis of such a study, a discourse could be prepared upon Stephen's life and character as an illustration and incentive to Christian fidelity. If the design was to make it

*This article is the first of a series of practical hints for expository preaching, following up the general discussions of the question which have appeared in previous numbers of the STUDENT. Other similar "studies" and "suggestions" from Rev. Charles F. Thwing, Rev. P. A. Nordell and others will appear at intervals in coming issues.—THE EDITOR.

strictly expository of the brief Scriptural notices about Stephen, the order of thought indicated above could be followed with a little adaptation. If the sermon were to approach nearer to the topical plan of treatment, the same material, at least in the main, could be used according to some such outline as this:—

(1) Introduction upon the critical relations at this time between the Jewish and Gentile Christians, and upon the increasing opposition of the unconverted Jews to Christianity.

(2) Stephen's adaptation to meet the emergencies of this crisis.

(3) His ability to learn from history (Acts vii.) lessons applicable to the present hour.

(4) His fitness to be the forerunner of Paul, the great champion of Gentile freedom and the fearless censor of Jewish unbelief.

(5) His faithfulness to his convictions and his duty, even unto death, as an example and proof of the saying of one of the church fathers that "the blood of the martyrs is seed;" that such devotion to truth must issue in unforeseen and incalculable gains for the truth.